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STATE FOR EUR/WE, EUR/RPM, EUR/ERA AND EUR/RUS

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TAGS: PREL PARM PGOV RS BE

SUBJECT: BELGIAN REACTION TO RESULTS OF U.S.-RUSSIA
PRESIDENTIAL SUMMIT

REF: STATE 71326

Classified By: Acting Political Economic Counselor Robert Kiene, reason
1.4(b) and (d).

¶1. (C) Poloff delivered reftel points orally on July 15 to Willy De Buck, Director for Central and Eastern Europe in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. De Buck said that Belgium supports an open approach to Russia, but wants to be realistic. The GOB has taken note of the change of tone in Washington in its relations with Russia, but sees only a sense of continuity in Moscow. He warned that the Russians are testing the diplomatic limits and will be looking for any concessions they can get from the United States and Europe, while making as few of their own as they can. It is important for the allies to stick to their own strategic interests, he said, and make concessions that are only in accord with those interests, not simply to encourage a change of approach in Russia.

¶2. (C) De Buck reminded Poloff that many of the issues being discussed bilaterally between the United States and Russia have consequences affecting the Europeans. Belgium is following those discussions closely, he said. He said that the Europeans expended significant political capital in developing their nuclear defenses. They would not like to see those defenses traded away without close coordination between the U.S. and Europe before any decisions are made. He urged that the United States and Europe synchronize their approaches, and said the GOB favors closer EU and NATO cooperation on security issues that relate to Russia. Such coordination can take place in NATO, the OSCE and the ongoing U.S.-EU dialogue. However, De Buck recommends bilateral contacts with the GOB and other allies as well.

¶3. (C) De Buck noted that the termination of OSCE monitoring in South Ossetia and UN monitoring in Abkhazia leaves the EU Monitoring Mission (EUMM) as the only international group on the ground in Georgia. He expects the Russians will make an effort to evict the EUMM as well. At the same time, he said, Russia has lost significant credibility and has experienced significant capital flight after the events of August 2008. They need to use what opportunities there are to rebuild that credibility, he concluded.

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